



San Diego City Attorney Jan I. Goldsmith

NEWS RELEASE

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**Contact: Mike Rivo, Deputy City Attorney
(619) 533-5660**

Owners of Property Tax Reduction Service Sentenced for Phony Bills Defendants to Pay Restitution to Victims

San Diego, CA: Michael Frank Willey and Eric A. Torres, co-owners of California Tax Reassessment, were ordered to pay more than \$40,000 in criminal fines and restitution following their guilty pleas to false advertising charges in San Diego Superior Court today.

Willey and Torres each pleaded guilty to six misdemeanor violations of state laws that regulate property tax reassessment services. The defendants were placed on probation for three years and are banned from owning or operating a property tax reduction business. They were each fined \$12,600 and ordered to make full refunds to victims of their false advertising scheme.

The San Diego City Attorney's Office filed charges against Willey and Torres in 2009 after receiving dozens of complaints about the business from San Diego homeowners. The defendants used a mailer that appeared to be from the San Diego County Assessor's Office. The mailer stated the homeowner had a payment due of \$186 to complete the property tax reassessment, and that a late fee of \$67 would be charged if the payment was not received by a specific date. The County Assessor's Office does not charge to process an application to reduce a homeowner's property taxes. A copy of the mailer is attached. "Businesses are prohibited from making their solicitations look like they are from the government in order to scare consumers into paying money they do not owe," said Deputy City Attorney Michael Rivo, who prosecuted the case.

Under the terms of a plea agreement, San Diego homeowners who paid *California Tax Reassessment* are entitled to full refunds. Requests for a refund can be made to the San Diego City Attorney's Office at (619) 533-5600.

For more information on filing a free property assessment appeal with the San Diego County Assessor's Office, call (858) 505-6262 or view the Assessor's website at www.sdarcc.com

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